FOOD AND DRUG CONSUMER'S HANDBOOK

A PUBLICATION OF THE DEPARTMENT OF
NATIONAL HEALTH AND WELFARE, CANADA

FOOD AND DRUG CONSUMER'S HANDBOOK

Educational Services
Food and Drug Directorate

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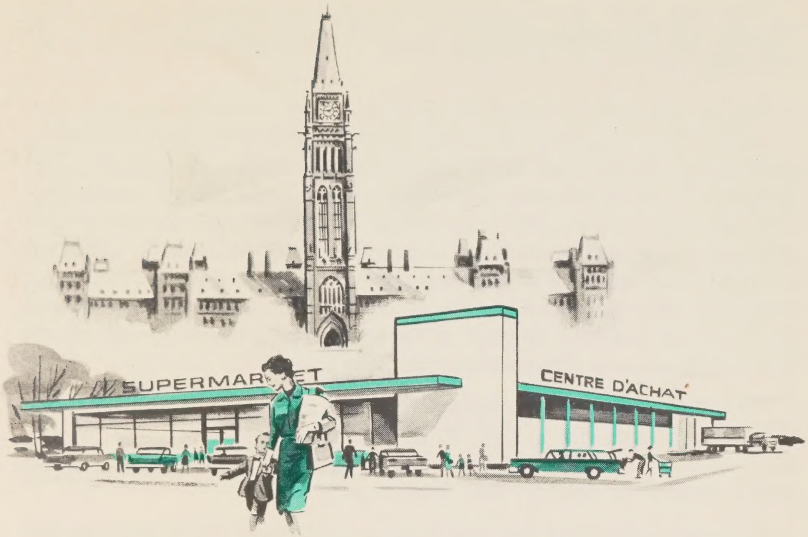


1. Our Food and Drug Laws

Canada's food and drug legislation is conceded by experts in many lands to be among the best in the world.

The Canadian Food and Drugs Act is a consumers' act. Its provisions are concerned in the first place with the health of the consumer, and secondly, with the prevention of fraudulent and deceptive practices in the preparation, sale, labelling and advertising of foods, drugs, cosmetics and medical devices.

In Canada's pioneer days, food travelled a fairly short route from producer to consumer. The population was small and there were proportionately more farmers producing food for themselves and for the rest of the people. There was limited processing of foods outside the home. Still, in the early days of food legislation, more than half of all food samples examined were adulterated.

Today, with a much larger population but relatively fewer farmers, the food industry has become a very complicated business. The housewife of the last century could never have imagined today's supermarket with its endless variety of attractive, tasty and easy-to-serve foods.

This has been made possible, in spite of dwindling farm food sources, by the contributions of modern science and technology in the food field.

Such contributions ensure the greatest use of available supplies with a minimum of waste at all stages – growing, harvesting, processing, packaging, distribution. Growing crops are protected against insect damage. Those which are stored for long periods before processing, such as cereal grains, must be further protected against insects and spoilage. The keeping qualities of perishable foods must be extended in some cases so they may reach the consumer's table in first-class condition. Yet, the very means used to make our food better and more attractive could, if used unwisely, mean a threat to its safety. This the Food and Drug authorities guard against.

You, the Canadian consumer, are better protected in food and drug matters than the consumers in most other countries. This means that you have a greater responsibility to guard against anything which would weaken or destroy that protection.

Remember, the best law can lose its meaning if the public doesn't care.

What is the Food and Drug Act? It is a consumers' act designed to protect the consumer against health hazards and fraud in the use or consumption and sale of foods, drugs, cosmetics and medical devices.

How long has Canada had food and drug legislation? Since January 1st, 1875, when Canada's first law to prevent adulteration of food, drink and drugs came into effect.

Why was such a law necessary? It was feared that the public health was being endangered by the widespread adulteration of foodstuffs and drugs. (Activities under the new law soon showed that concern to be well-founded.)

Have conditions improved under the Food and Drugs Act? Decidedly. In 1875 more than 51 per cent of foods sampled were adulterated. In spite of better sampling methods, the figure today is well under ten per cent – possibly two to five per cent.

Who administers the Food and Drugs Act? The administration and enforcement of the Act is largely the responsibility of the Food and Drug Directorate of the Department

of National Health and Welfare at Ottawa. The Directorate also administers the Proprietary or Patent Medicine Act and the Narcotic Control Act.

How are Food and Drug Regulations enforced?

The Directorate's five regional offices, each with its own inspection and laboratory services, do most of the enforcement work. Each region has a number of district offices. District inspectors are responsible for enforcement in their prescribed territory. Plants are inspected. Samples are collected at the manufacturing as well as the retail levels and examined scientifically in the Food and Drug laboratories. Imports are examined at customs entry ports. Complaints are followed up. Minor violations of the regulations are brought to the attention of the manufacturers and may also result in a warning being issued. Offences of a more serious nature may draw a more severe warning and, if a health hazard is involved, may result in seizure of an offending product and/or prosecution.

What does food and drug protection cost the Canadian consumer? The per capita cost to Canadians is about 55 cents a year — a small price to pay for such valuable protection.

II. Educational Services

The function of Food and Drug Educational Services is to inform the public and educators about the food and drug regulations which have been enacted solely to protect, benefit and help consumers at home and in the market place. Formerly called the Consumer Division the name was changed in keeping with the expansion of services to educators – schools, provincial health departments and professional groups – as well as consumers in general.

These services include distribution of booklets, bulletins, fact sheets and food and drug education kits. Personal communication is established through displays and speeches. The central and coordinating office is in Ottawa, and in the five regional offices, Montreal, Halifax, Toronto, Winnipeg and Vancouver, regional consultants develop programs to suit the needs of the area.

Another responsibility of Educational Services is to find out what Canadian consumers think about matters under the jurisdiction of the Food and Drug Directorate. The FDD invites questions, opinions, comments or criticism pertaining to health hazards and fraud in food, drugs and cosmetics. We are always interested in the consumer's side of the story.

The frequency of a suggestion sometimes indicates a need for special attention from the Directorate. It may also serve as a basis on

which to propose new regulations for consumer protection or to amend existing ones.

If you would like to know more about food and drug activities here are some suggestions:

- To answer queries or settle an argument, get to know the food and drug offices in your area. There are five regions and twenty-four local offices (listed on page 21).
- Find out the name of the regional consultant in your area from the FDD office. She can help with an education program on food and drugs, by participating in group forums, speeches, panel discussions or by answering questions by mail or phone.
- You can order our free publications (see page 20) and have your name listed to receive our regular fact sheets and new publications as they are released.
- For housewives at home during the day, TV and radio programs occasionally carry interviews with FDD officers.

An educated and informed consumer shops with confidence and gets the most benefit from the Food and Drug laws so closely associated with everyday living. Knowledgeable consumers can also help in the enforcement of the Food and Drugs Act by reporting apparent infractions.

III. Questions and Answers

Q Does the Food and Drug Directorate set standards for the manufacture of foods? Drugs? Cosmetics? Medical devices?

A Under the Food and Drugs Act and Regulations, standards are prescribed for certain foods such as cheese, butter, ketchup, jam, bread, meat preparations, alcoholic beverages and many more. These standards indicate which ingredients must be used and in what proportions; and which ingredients may be used and to what limits. Ingredients not mentioned in the standards may not be used at all.

Standards are set for certain drugs also, and many others are manufactured to standards established in official documents listed in the Act.

There are no standards of composition for cosmetics or medical devices, but the Act specifically forbids the sale of cosmetics containing any substance that might be injurious to health under normal conditions of use. In like manner, it forbids the sale of medical devices that might cause injury when used under normal conditions.

Q Do controls exist regarding the preparation of foods and drugs for which there are no standards?

A Yes. Every manufacturer is bound by the Food and Drugs Act which forbids the sale of food that contains any poisonous or harmful

substance, any filth, or any decomposed or diseased animal or vegetable matter; also any food that is adulterated or that has been manufactured or stored under unsanitary conditions. Similar protective regulations govern the manufacture and sale of drugs, as well as that of cosmetics and medical devices.

Q Does the law require certain information to be placed on food, drug and cosmetic labels?

A Yes. One of the important purposes of the labelling regulations under the Food and Drugs Act is to ensure that all labels for foods, drugs or cosmetics give an accurate description of the contents so that the purchaser may not be deceived in any way.

For example, the main panel of food labels must display "clearly and prominently" the brand or trade name, the common name of the food and a correct declaration of net contents. Other mandatory information may appear elsewhere on the label but not on the bottom of the package. Similarly, there are requirements laid down for labels of drugs and cosmetics.

Q Does the Food and Drug Directorate test all items which come under its jurisdiction before they are offered for sale?

A No. This would require too large a staff. However, under a scientific process of checking, all products eventually come under Food and Drug scrutiny with a view to detecting any shortcomings and punishing serious violations. Under the Act it is the manufacturer's responsibility to make sure his products are safe. Most manufacturers take this responsibility seriously; where laxity is observed, Food and Drug vigilance is intensified.

Q Are foods, drugs and cosmetic products imported from other countries examined at the Customs before being allowed entry into Canada?

A Imported products must meet the requirements of the Food and Drugs Act and Regulations and they are checked by Food and Drug Inspectors at ports of entry before being passed by Customs authorities.

Q Does the Food and Drug Directorate control the use of food colours or other chemical additives in foods?

A Yes, specific requirements are laid down in the regulations under the Food and Drugs Act which must be met before any food additive (for example, a preservative, food colour, emulsifier or conditioning agent) can be introduced into the food supply. This is to ensure that

nothing is permitted to be added to food in any quantity or under any circumstances that could create a hazard to the public health. Before it is permitted for use in or upon foods, a food additive must be shown to be harmless as used; there must be a technological justification for its use in the interest of or for the benefit of the consumer; and there must be a reliable method of assay for the determination of the additive in the food. Furthermore, the additive must not be used to conceal damage or to lead to the perpetration of fraud. The regulations list the food additives which meet these requirements, the purpose for which each may be used, the food or foods they may be used in and the maximum level of use, or tolerance, in terms of parts per million. These tolerances are set very low – well within the safe limits determined by the best scientific methods. The Directorate must always bear in mind that even in a normal, well-balanced diet the total amounts of chemical additives must be carefully controlled and the amounts permitted in each food are therefore kept low enough to avoid all possible hazard.

We should remember that "too much" of anything can become harmful, or "poisonous", under certain circumstances. For example, just plain overeating can have nasty consequences. Too liberal use of salt, vinegar, spices and other condiments can be a health hazard. The answer, then, is to stay within "safe limits".

We are inclined to take for granted the abundance, the quality and the variety of the foods available today. Without chemical additives, the picture would be very different. In our highly industrialized society, more and more foods are processed, modified or packaged, and chemical food additives are required in the production of these attractive and convenient products.

Q Many fruits and vegetables are sprayed with chemicals against insects and plant diseases. Is there any danger in eating such produce?

A No, not if the chemical has been properly used according to the manufacturer's instructions. In this case, no harmful residues will remain on the produce at the time of marketing. The consumer is protected against harmful amounts of pesticide residue on foods through the enforcement of tolerances or safe limits of residue laid down under the Food and Drug Regulations. The Directorate continually examines fruits and vegetables from growers, grocery stores and import shipments to ensure that they do not contain harmful amounts of pesticide residues. Nevertheless, it is a wise precaution to wash and wipe all fruits and vegetables thoroughly before eating, regardless of whether or not they are to be cooked.

Q. Is there any danger in using artificial sweeteners?

A. A moderate use of artificial sweeteners is not a health hazard. The Food and Drug Directorate permits the addition of artificial sweeteners only in foods recommended for special dietary purposes. The greatest consumption is through their use in low calorie soft drinks. A moderate daily intake of soft drinks could be considered as one to two glasses for a child or three to four for an adult. However any use of artificially sweetened food should be limited to persons who are trying to reduce the number of calories or carbohydrates in their diet.

Q. What are vitamin and mineral supplements? Are they necessary?

A. A wide variety of foods, cheaper and tastier than most vitamin pills, is available in Canada. If we include meats, eggs, dairy products, cereals, fruits and vegetables in our daily meals we can obtain most of the vitamins and minerals we require. An exception to this is Vitamin D. This vitamin is essential for growth and is needed by all babies, children and pregnant or nursing mothers. Milk fortified with Vitamin D would provide them with the required amount of this vitamin. When this product is not available in your community, Vitamin D supplements, usually fish liver oils, should be taken to provide 400 International Units of Vitamin D daily; this is the amount recommended by the Canadian Council on Nutrition.

Q. What do the terms "an excellent source" or "a good source" of a vitamin mean when used on a food label?

A. They may be used only for foods to which no vitamins have been added. The regulations specify the amount of any one vitamin that must occur naturally in a reasonable daily intake of a food, before the term "an excellent source" or "a good source" may be used. A reasonable daily intake may be defined as the amount of a food which a person would normally consume in a day as part of a good diet; as a rule this is one serving. The term "an excellent source" of a vitamin may be used if the amount of the vitamin in a reasonable daily intake of the specified food meets minimum levels set out in the Food and Drug Regulations. Similarly, a food to which no vitamin has been added may be termed "a good source" of the named vitamin if the amount of the vitamin in a reasonable daily intake meets the requirements of the regulations respecting the use of the term.

Q. I understand that vitamin preparations may lose some of their potency during prolonged storage. Does the Food and Drug Direct-

orate have any regulations concerning expiration dates of vitamin products?

A Yes, vitamin preparations must carry an expiration date on both the outer carton and inner label of the product. This expiration date represents the period of time during which the product will maintain its labelled potency.

Q Have any measures been taken to prevent advertisers from making false and exaggerated claims about their food or drug products?

A The Food and Drugs Act forbids the advertising of any food or drug in a manner that is false, misleading or deceptive or likely to create an erroneous impression; nor can they be advertised as a treatment, preventive or cure for any of a list of serious diseases such as rheumatoid arthritis, kidney disease, heart disease, diabetes, cancer, gout, epilepsy and obesity.

Q How do you select a margarine which is a good source of polyunsaturated fat?

A Food and Drug label regulations help consumers select a margarine with a high content of polyunsaturates. Look for a label that has two statements grouped close together:

% by weight of polyunsatured fatty acids
% by weight of saturated fatty acids

The regulations allow those two statements on the label if the chemical composition and the ratio of polyunsaturated to fatty acid meet the FDD requirements. Such claims as "made from 100% corn oil" or "100% vegetable oil" have no importance as far as making sure you are getting a margarine which is a good source of polyunsaturated fat.

Q Some packages of food appear to have a lot of headspace. Does the Food and Drug Directorate have any requirements concerning this?

A Certain foods, particularly flaky, light and fragile products, will settle down into the carton after packing and during shipping, thus giving an impression of excessive headspace. This is sometimes unavoidable, and within reasonable limits cannot be considered deceptive. However, the Food and Drugs Act requires that packages be properly filled when they leave the production line and it does not permit the sale of food which is packaged in a manner that is deceptive or misleading or is likely to create an erroneous impression regarding its quantity. In addition, an accurate declaration of the net

contents must appear on the main panel of the label. The wise consumer always looks for this information.

Q. Why doesn't the Food and Drug Directorate place a ceiling price on certain foods, drugs and cosmetics.

A. The Act and Regulations do not provide for the control of prices in any way. For that reason the Food and Drug Directorate cannot regulate the cost of any article.

Q. Many home poisoning accidents result from household drugs and chemical products such as headache tablets, cleaners, insect sprays or paint removers. Shouldn't the manufacturers be required to place warnings on the labels of all such products?

A. Some of these products do contain warnings and these may indeed be useful in alerting parents. However, the majority of such accidents happen to children under five years of age. They are too young to read and often too young to heed a spoken warning.

Since household chemicals are neither foods, nor drugs, nor cosmetics, their labels do not come under the jurisdiction of the Food and Drug Directorate. However, the Directorate is very concerned with preventing such accidents and works closely with the Poison Control Centres across Canada in this regard. The poison control information unit of the Directorate collects information about toxic ingredients in household chemicals and drugs together with the treatment indicated in each case. This information is supplied to Poison Control Centres across Canada. It is a simple matter now for a doctor, called in on a poisoning case anywhere in Canada, to call one of these centres and receive, usually within minutes, all the information he needs to proceed with the treatment. If your child swallows poison, call your doctor immediately. Tell him not only what the child has swallowed but also the brand name of the product to ensure proper identification of the poison involved.

Always remember that a child will eat anything; keep all chemicals, drugs, cosmetics and anything that can possibly be swallowed out of the reach of children. Proper storage and handling of all household chemicals and remedies, and constant vigilance are "musts" if accidental poisonings in the home are to be prevented.

Q. Does the Food and Drug Directorate "approve" the drugs that are sold on the Canadian market?

A. No. When a manufacturer wants to market a new drug, he must file with the Food and Drug Directorate a new drug submission, detailing all the data relating to this new product. This information

is reviewed by the Food and Drug scientists and in many cases laboratory tests are performed to compare results. When the requirements for clinical effectiveness and other factors have been established to the satisfaction of the Directorate, a "Notice of Compliance" is issued and the drug may be released for sale.

It is impossible for the Food and Drug Directorate to carry out all the tests necessary to prove the "safety" of the drug; therefore no drug is approved by the Food and Drug Directorate. It is the manufacturer's responsibility to ensure the safety of his drug for the purpose intended. Remember, no drug is safe under all circumstances, so never "pass along" your prescription to a friend.

Q. Is all the information supplied on drug labels of importance to consumers?

A Yes. When using any drug, read the label carefully for detailed directions and other information before using. This information is important and should never be disregarded since it provides the necessary details concerning the proper use of the drug. For example, some labels contain statements concerning maximum daily dosage, conditions and method of use and special warnings. Pay particular attention to all warnings. Self-diagnosis and self-medication are not to be recommended, and it is safest to take drugs only on your doctor's advice.

Remember all drugs are potentially dangerous.

Q. Where should drugs be kept in the home?

A Each drug requires a specific storage environment. Some require cold or refrigerated storage; others must be kept in a dry or dark place. Because some drugs may lose their potency or change into harmful chemicals if improperly stored, it is very important that you ask your pharmacist where to keep the medicine you buy.

It is also very important to store all drugs out of the reach of children and under lock and key, as pointed out in the answer to another question in this chapter.

IV. Role of the Consumer

The consumer's responsibility in ensuring that the food and drug laws are really effective has already been pointed out. Many Canadians do take that responsibility seriously. This is encouraging but it is not good enough. We must each do our part.

DOING OUR PART

When we shop . . .

We should always read the label.

The Food and Drug Regulations specify certain information which must appear on the labels for the consumer's information. Labels must tell an honest story. They must not be misleading in any way, but must provide consumers with an accurate description of the contents of the package in a clear and prominent manner.

We have a duty to read and compare, and to report offending labels so they can be made to conform to the regulations. We have, also, a duty to read most carefully the directions for use – especially those for drugs and certain cosmetics – so as to protect ourselves and our families from possible ill effects through improper or careless use.

The label is more than a mere ornament. Its real function is to tell truthfully what a package contains and thus to protect both our health and our handbag.

Beware of quacks. We should take a second look at "quacks" and their wares.

At first glance, the quack or performer of questionable "cures" may seem genuine enough and his claims most convincing. But he rates a second look for it shows him up for what he is — a fraud.

Much has been written about the charlatans and their methods of operation. It would seem that by now everyone has been warned sufficiently to recognize these peddlers of phoney pills, dubious devices and drastic reducing plans and to treat them with the proper skepticism. Yet they continue to fool certain people while filling their own pockets. It is strange but true that many who place no confidence in doctors or modern medical science will believe these self-styled miracle men.

The food quack or faddist has been particularly successful in exploiting the Canadian consumer. He has been quick to take advantage of the fact that, while everyone is interested in food, many still do not understand the basic facts of nutrition. The food faddist would have us believe that certain foods, often rare, expensive or distasteful, have special "health-giving" or "weight-reducing" powers. There are no such magic foods nor is there any substitute for well-planned nutritious meals. If you are really overweight or are suffering from some disorder which may be related to diet, consult your doctor.

At best, quack remedies are worthless — at their worst, they have resulted in deaths. At all times they are a threat to public health by delaying proper treatment of serious ailments. Reliance on quacks has proved a costly and bitter experience for many — costly in terms of health as well as money.

Consumers can help put an end to the quack's activities by letting the Food and Drug Directorate know about instances of patently false or exaggerated claims for health benefits attributed to foods, drugs or devices which are offered for sale.

When we prepare our family's meals . . .

With so many foods being put up in packaged form, we must do much buying on faith — faith in our food and drug laws and faith in our manufacturers and their observance of those laws. Yet, it sometimes happens that all is not as it should be, and this only comes to

light when we open the package – usually when we are preparing a meal. The contents may appear discoloured or spoiled. Insects or other unclean matter may show up in packaged foods. Foods may not be as represented on the label. There may be reason to suspect that fresh fruits or vegetables have been contaminated by insect spray or in some other manner. These are details we should report to the nearest food and drug inspector. Addresses appear on the back page of this booklet.

When we store food, drugs and household chemicals . . .

The government and the food and drug industries do their best to protect us. Their efforts can be undone by the consumer's own carelessness. "Doing our part" involves:

Refrigerating all perishable foods, including vacuum-packaged meats, as soon as we bring them home, and returning left-overs to the refrigerator or to a cool place as soon as possible.

Cooking and using frozen foods promptly once they have thawed. It is not advisable to re-freeze them.

Keeping food storage and preparation areas scrupulously clean and free from flies, bugs and other pests.

Storing medicines and household chemicals out of the reach of children and taking all other precautions to avoid accidents from the use of these products.

N.B. Remember – it is good housekeeping practice to wash fresh fruit and vegetables thoroughly in running water before use.

V. Free Booklets

Readers may wish elaboration of some of the points discussed in this booklet. Information is available in booklets and pamphlets prepared by the Educational Services of the Food and Drug Directorate. We suggest you write for one or more of the following booklets, free on request:

Why Get Ill From Foods

Keep Your Home Free From Poisonings

If It Is Not Food It Is Poison

Food, Drug, Cosmetic Protection for Canadians

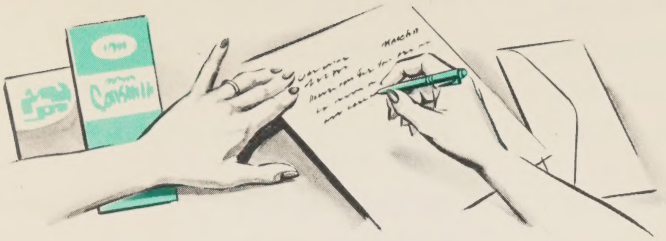
Cosmetics

Keep Residues of Drugs and Pesticides Out of Milk

Drugs – Handle With Care

What Does It Mean (Glossary of Drug Terms)

Index of Consumer Memos published from 1966 - 1969



VI. Handy Addresses

Here is a handy reference list of addresses of the Food and Drug Offices.

Educational Services

Food and Drug Directorate, Department of National Health and Welfare, Tunney's Pasture, Ottawa 3, Ontario.

Food and Drug Offices

Halifax, N.S.	P.O. Box 605, Ralston Bldg., 1557 Hollis Street
Charlottetown, P.E.I.	P.O. Box 1311, Dominion Bldg.
Saint John, N.B.	P.O. Box 396, New Customs Bldg.
St. John's, Nfld.	P.O. Box 5115, Sir Humphrey Gilbert Bldg.
Sydney, N.S.	P.O. Box 324, Federal Bldg.
Montreal 1, Que.	New Customs House Bldg., 400 Youville Square
Hull, Que.	Achbar Bldg., P.O. Box 683, 50 rue Principale
Quebec, Que.	118 Dalhousie Street
Sherbrooke, Que.	P.O. Box 1120, 315 King St. West
Trois-Rivieres, Que.	P.O. Box 1146, Post Office Bldg.
Toronto 7, Ont.	55 St. Clair Ave. East
Belleville, Ont.	P.O. Box 93, New Federal Bldg., Pinnacle Street

Cornwall, Ont.	Federal Bldg., 45 Second St. East
Hamilton, Ont.	Room 606, 150 Main St. West
Kitchener, Ont.	Federal Bldg., Duke & Frederick Sts.
London, Ont.	P.O. Box 504, Dominion Public Bldg., 457 Richmond St.
Ottawa 4, Ont.	100 Gloucester St.
Port Arthur, Ont.	Public Bldg., 33 Court St. South
Sudbury, Ont.	P.O. Box 564, Federal Bldg., 19 Lisgar St. South
Windsor, Ont.	Dominion Public Bldg., 137 Ouellette Avenue
Winnipeg, Man.	Federal Bldg., Main & Water Sts.
Brandon, Man.	P.O. Box 416, Federal Bldg.
Regina, Sask.	402 Derrick Bldg., 2431 - 11th Ave.
Saskatoon, Sask.	211 Federal Building, 101 - 22nd St. E.
Vancouver 1, B.C.	1001 West Pender St.
Calgary, Alta.	Customs Bldg.
Edmonton, Alta.	Federal Public Bldg.
Kamloops, B.C.	317 Seymour St.
Victoria, B.C.	Belmont Bldg., 805 Government St.